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## NOTES AND DISCUSSION.

## TALMUDICAL MISCELLANIES.

## IV.

## LAKES OF THE HOLY LAND.

BASED upon the verse, "He hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods,"<sup>1</sup> there are in Talmud and Midrash enumerated certain seas (lakes) and rivers that either border the Holy Land, or are within its limits. We find on our subject six different accounts, all of them, however, agreeing upon the number of the seas (lakes) as being seven. The names differ considerably, and the scholars—Joseph Schwartz,<sup>2</sup> A. Neubauer,<sup>3</sup> N. Brüll<sup>4</sup>—who treated of them, differ greatly in their opinion as to the proper reading of the names and location of the seas—or, to be more exact, the lakes in question.

In our work<sup>5</sup> we pursued our subject at some length.

In the following research we re-examine the matter. In order to give a survey of the different accounts we array them thus :—

A.<sup>6</sup> "Seven seas (lakes) surround the Holy Land, viz., the Great Sea, the lake of Tiberias, the lake of Samcho, the Salt Lake, the lake Chultha, the lake Shalitha, the lake Apamea."

B.<sup>7</sup> has the following order and reading :—"The Great Sea, the lake of Tiberias, the lake of Cob'bo, the Salt Lake, the lake Chiltho, the lake Silhat, the lake Apamea."

C.<sup>8</sup> R. Dime, in the name of R. Jochanan, counts them thus :—"The lake of Tiberias, the lake of Sodom, the lake of Chilath, the lake of Chiltha, the lake Sibche, the lake of Apamea, and the Great Sea."

D.<sup>9</sup> "The Holy Land is situated on seven seas—the Great Sea, the lake of Tiberias, the Salt Lake, the lake Sibche, the lake Chiltha, the lake Seryath, the lake Apamea."

<sup>1</sup> Psalm xxiv. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Tebuoth Haarey*, p. 27ff.

<sup>3</sup> *La Géographie du Talmud*, p. 24ff.

<sup>4</sup> Frankel's *Monatsschrift*, xvii., 336ff.

<sup>5</sup> *Aruch Completum*, iv., 134ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Jerus. Kilayim*, ix., p. 32c.

<sup>7</sup> *Jerus. Kethuboth*, xii., p. 35b.

<sup>8</sup> *Babli Baba Bathra*, 74b.

<sup>9</sup> *Midr. Shocher Tob*, chap. xxiv.

E.<sup>1</sup> has as follows :—"The lake of Sodom, the lake Salito, the lake Damuch, the Salt Lake, the lake Arabah, the lake of Tiberias, and the Great Sea."

F.<sup>2</sup> (quoting the source C.) reads :—"The lake of Tiberias, the lake Chilath, the lake of Sodom, the lake of Akko, the lake Pameas, the lake Sachbe, and the Great Sea."

After due comparison, sifting and examination of the readings of the several sources, the report contained in A. might be taken as the basis of our investigation.

All reports have all alike—

I. The *Great Sea* (Yam Haggadol, or Yamo Rabba). By this is meant the *Mediterranean Sea*, which, already in the Bible,<sup>3</sup> is called the Great Sea, and the eastern coast of which forms the western border of the Holy Land. The Targum Jerushalmi I. renders the verse,<sup>4</sup> "And for the western border ye shall have the *great sea*" by adding the word Okeanos. The same expression Jamo Rabbo d'Okeanos is to be found in the manuscript Targum to the Psalms.<sup>5</sup> In the Midrashim, however, Okeanos signifies usually the (Atlantic) ocean.<sup>6</sup>

II. All the reports have, moreover, alike the *lake' of Tiberias*. In the Bible<sup>8</sup> it bears the name Jom Kinnereth, or Jom Kinnroth;<sup>9</sup> in Targum and Talmud and Midrash<sup>10</sup> Gnesar, Ginesar; in the New Testament<sup>11</sup> as in our sources ἡ θάλασσα τῆς Τιβεριάδος, and so still called to-day in Arabic Bahireh Tabrijathon, lake of Tiberias. The Midrash<sup>12</sup>, dividing the word Genesar into two Hebrew words, ingeniously remarks, "The entire coast of Tiberias is called Kinnereth, having received the name Gennesareth because it resembles (in beauty) the gardens of princes."<sup>13</sup> The same is related also by Josephus,<sup>14</sup> "The country also that lies over against this lake hath the same name of Gennesareth; its nature is wonderful, as well as its beauty. Its soil is so fruitful that all sorts of trees can grow upon it. One may

<sup>1</sup> *Midrash Conen* quoted in *Amude Shesh*.

<sup>2</sup> *Jalkut Psalm*, § 697.

<sup>3</sup> Num. xxxiv. 6ff; Joshua i. 4; Ezekiel xlvi. 10; by the Romans called Mare Internum, the name Mare Mediterraneum is of a recent date.

<sup>4</sup> Num. i. c.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm lxxii. 10.

<sup>6</sup> See *Aruch Completum*, I., p. 39, 255.

<sup>7</sup> In Hebrew and Aramaic *Jam*, *Jamo* signifies not only sea, but also lake.

<sup>8</sup> Num. xxxiv. 11; Joshua xiii. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Joshua xiii. 3.

<sup>10</sup> See *Aruch Compl.*, II., 323; see also IV., 13.

<sup>11</sup> John xxi. 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Genesis Rabba*, ch. 98.

<sup>13</sup> כְּנִי עֲרִים divided in כְּנִי עֲרִים.

<sup>14</sup> *Wars of the Jews*, III. x. 8.

call this place the ambition of nature, where it forces those plants that are naturally enemies to one another to agree together ; it is a happy contention of the seasons."

There is a wide-spread legend of the Rabbis<sup>1</sup> that the well Mirjam, called after the sister of Moses, followed Israel all over their wandering through the desert, and when they finally took possession of the Holy Land the well has been united with the lake of Tiberias. The reason for this legend might be sought in the circumstance that the waters of this lake were very agreeable, especially when kept in the open air, and so the mythographers could not find a more fitting and worthy place for the Mirjam well which had disappeared than to unite it with the most agreeable waters of the lake of Gennesareth or Tiberias. Josephus<sup>2</sup> says of this lake, "Its waters are sweet and very agreeable for drinking, for they are finer than the thick waters of other fens ; the lake is also pure, and on every side ends directly at the shores and at the sand. It is also of a temperate nature when you draw it up, and of a more gentle nature, than river or fountain water, and yet always cooler than one would expect in so diffuse a place as this is. Now when this water is kept in the open air it is as cold as that snow, which the country people are accustomed to make by night in summer." The Jordan passes through the lake of Tiberias.<sup>3</sup> As to the way in which it passes through there are two accounts in the Talmud. The one<sup>4</sup> says, "The Jordan takes its rise in the cave of Pameas (Panium) and passes through the lake of Sobche (?), and the lake of Tiberias, and runs finally into the Mediterranean Sea." According to the other source<sup>5</sup> the Jordan passes first through the lake of Sebche and then through the lake of Tiberias and then through the lake of Sodom, and finally disappears in the Mediterranean Sea. This latter is affirmed by Josephus.<sup>6</sup> He says, "It (the lake of Gennesareth) is divided into two parts by the river Jordan. Now Panium is thought to be the fountain of the river, but in reality [it] is carried thither after an occult manner from the place called *Phiala*. This place lies as you go up to Trachonitis, and on the right hand, and, indeed, it has the name of *Phiala* (vial or bowl), very justly from the *roundness of its circumference*, as being round like a wheel ; its water continues always up to its edges, without either sinking or

<sup>1</sup> *Jerus. Kilayim*, ix., 32c ; see *Shabb*, 35b, according to the reading of the Munich MS. ; *Genes. Rabba*, ch. 5 ; *Levit. Rabba*, ch. 22 ; *Num. R.*, ch. 19 ; *Tanch. Chukkhath*, § 21 ; *Kohel. R.* to § V'jithron.

<sup>2</sup> *Wars*, III. x. 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Genes. Rabba*, ch. 4 ; *Tossephoth B. Bathra* to 74b.

<sup>4</sup> *B. Bathra*, l.c.

<sup>5</sup> *Bechor*, 55a.

<sup>6</sup> *Wars*, l.c.

running over. . . . Now Jordan's visible stream arises from this cavern (of Panium) and divides the marshes and fens of the lake *Semochonitis*; when it hath run another hundred and twenty furlongs, it first passes by the city Julias, and then passes the middle of the lake Gennesareth, after which it runs a long way over a desert, and then makes its exit into the lake Asphaltitis."

We give this account fully, for we have to come back to this part of Phiala a little later. Here we note only that Josephus, in accordance with the second Talmudical passage above mentioned, gives like wise the order in which the Jordan passes through (1) the lake *Semochonitis*, (2) the lake Gennesareth, (3) the lake Asphaltitis.

The lake *Semochonitis* is, as we will soon show, identical with the lake Sebche or Sobche, that is to be corrected into Samcho (= *Somochonitis*). The lake Gennesareth is identical with the lake of Tiberias, while the lake Asphaltitis of Josephus is the same as the lake Sodom of the Talmud.

III. *The Lake Samcho* in the source A.—and that is corrupted as Cobbo (source B.), Damuch (source E.), Sibche (C, D.), or Sabche (F.)—is identical with the before-mentioned *Semachonitis* or *Somochonitis* of Josephus,<sup>1</sup> and is called in the Bible<sup>2</sup> Merom. According to Josephus,<sup>3</sup> it is thirty furlongs in breadth and sixty in length. Its marshes reach as far as the region Daphne, which in other respects is a delicious place, and has such fountains as supply water to what is called Little Jordan, under the temple of the golden calf, where it is sent into Great Jordan. This lake was considered as having belonged to the land of Naphtali. The words,<sup>4</sup> "Possess thou the sea and the south," are explained by R. Akiba<sup>5</sup> thus, "The sea," that is, the lake *Semochonitis*; "the south," that is, the lake of Tiberias. The same is repeated in other places,<sup>6</sup> where our word appears in different forms, as Subbi, Sufne, which must be read Sumche—that is, *Semochonitis*, or *Samochonitis*.

The words,<sup>7</sup> "These waters issue forth toward the eastern region, and shall go down unto the Arabah: and they shall go toward the sea, unto the sea which was made to issue forth; and the waters shall be healed," find the following illustration:<sup>8</sup>— "Toward the eastern

<sup>1</sup> Besides the quoted *Wars* III. x. 7; see IV. i. 1; and *Antiquities*, V. iv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Joshua xi. 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Wars*, IV. i. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Deuter. xxxiii. 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Jerus. B. Bathra* V. 15a.

<sup>6</sup> *Tossephtha B. Kama*, ch. 5; *Sifre, Habrachah*, § 355.

<sup>7</sup> Ezek. xlvi. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Jerus. Shekalim* VI., 3a; *Jalk. Ezekiel*, § 383, with the false reading *Sobche*.

region" means the lake Semechonitis; "Into the Arabah" means the lake of Tiberias; "They shall go towards the sea," means the Salt Lake; "Which was made to issue forth," means the Mediterranean Sea.

A later Midrash<sup>1</sup> misunderstood this passage as having in view the Great Sea, that is the ocean, which by its creation was made powerless and dead, therefore called Dead Sea, and which at the end of times will be healed, as the prophet suggests.

IV. *The Dead Sea* just mentioned means the lake of Sodom (according to our sources (C, E and F), or the Salt Lake (according to A, B and D), or Salt Sea. The latter name is already to be found in the Bible,<sup>2</sup> also called Jom Hoarabah, Sea of the Plain,<sup>3</sup> or East Sea.<sup>4</sup> Diodorus Siculus<sup>5</sup> and Josephus<sup>6</sup> name it the Asphaltic Sea. The latter also the Sodomitic Lake;<sup>7</sup> while the older Greek<sup>8</sup> and Latin<sup>9</sup> historians call it Dead Sea. This so-called Dead Sea is the final receptacle of the river Jordan, the lowest and largest of the three lakes which interrupt the rush of its downward course.

The name, Dead Sea has become established from the belief in the greatly exaggerated stories of its deadly character and gloomy aspect. Hence, also, the fable that no birds could fly across it alive. That no fish, even carried by the current of the Jordan, can live in this sea, J. Schwartz testifies.<sup>10</sup> From this idea that everything near to the Dead Sea must needs be destroyed, is taken the Talmudical phrase,<sup>11</sup> "Carry the use of it to the Salt Sea." That means it cannot be utilised.

Concerning this Salt Sea, or the Sea of Sodom,<sup>12</sup> it is said that it is so thick that no one can sink to its bottom.<sup>13</sup> The plenty of bitumen

<sup>1</sup> *Exodus Rabba*, ch. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Genes. xiv. 3; Num. xxxiv. 3, 12; Deut. iii. 17; Joshua iii. 16; xii. 3, and other places.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. iii. 17; iv. 49; 2 Kings xiv. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xlvi. 18; Joel ii. 20; Zech. xiv. 8. <sup>5</sup> ii. 48; xix. 98.

<sup>6</sup> *Antiq.* I. ix.; IV. v. 1; IX. x. 1; *Wars*, I. xxxiii. 5; III. x. 7; IV. viii. 2, 4. <sup>7</sup> *Ant.*, V. i. 22.

<sup>8</sup> Pausanias, V. 7; Galen, IV. 9.

<sup>9</sup> Justin, xxxvi. 3, 6.

<sup>10</sup> *Tebuoth Haarez*, p. 29, cf. Raumer *Palestina*, p. 55, where other instances are enumerated.

<sup>11</sup> *Bech.* 13b., *Ab. Zara*, 53a (Rashi and Munich MS.); see also there 71b.

<sup>12</sup> About Sodom salt, *Erub.* 17b. and parallel passages, see *Aruch Compl.* VI., 23; see also V. 127.

<sup>13</sup> *Shabb.* 108b; see also *Tosephta Shabb.*, ch. 12, 13.

to be found in this water has, however, a healing effect on the human body.<sup>1</sup> Due to the preconceived notion of the deadly character of this sea, the Haggadists of recent Midrashim explain the verse in Ezekiel above quoted<sup>2</sup> as referring to the Dead Sea, indulging, however, in the hope that at the end of times it will be healed. In this sphere of imagination falls also the explanation of another verse,<sup>3</sup> in reference to which it is said,<sup>4</sup> "He who heals the sea will heal also thee."

V. The *Lake of Chiltha* (according to reading of B, C, D) or Chilat or Chultha (according to F, A) has nothing to do with Chol, sand, as Schwartz suggests, but means in Aramaic, *roundness*, and is, in my opinion, that part of the lake Semechonitis from Paneas, that is called by Abulfeda,<sup>5</sup> Bachrat Banis, and later, Bachrat el *Chule*.<sup>6</sup> Now we must remember that Josephus<sup>7</sup> called the fountain-head of the Jordan, Phiala, on account of the roundness of its circumference, as being round, etc., etc. There occurs in the Talmud<sup>8</sup> also the expression, "He who sees the sea as round as a dish." According to the reading in source E, the Salt Lake corresponds with the Lake of Chultha, Chiltha of the other sources. This source, however, could not have meant by the salt lake the lake of Sodom, for it enumerates it separately, consequently it meant just the same as what is conveyed by the other sources by the lake of Chultha, which was also called a salt place (Bald el Malchi<sup>9</sup>) on account of the salt crusts that covered that region. We must, therefore, render the lake of Chultha by "the lake of roundness," "round lake."

VI. The lake *Saliath*, or better (according to the source D), Sheriath, is probably identical in position with Beth Sherye, near to Tiberias and Scythopolis.<sup>10</sup> Formerly it was a renowned city called Jezreel,<sup>11</sup> to-day named Zerin. Near to it is the fountain mentioned 1 Sam. xxix. 1. without name. After this city was lake Sheriath named. Being not far from Akko, the sixth source (F) called it therefore also the lake of Akko, although Akko lay beyond Palestine. It seems they wanted only to make up the number of seven seas (lakes).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Wars*, IV. viii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 693 note 7, and p. 694, note 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lamentations ii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> *Echa Rabb.* to this verse.

<sup>5</sup> *Tabula Syr.* 155.

<sup>6</sup> Wiener, *Real Wörterbuch*, I. 85.

<sup>7</sup> *Wars*, III. x. 7. See above, p. 692, note 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Jer. Ab. Zara*, iii. 42c.

<sup>9</sup> Schwartz, l.c., p. 28.

<sup>10</sup> See *Aruch Completum* II., 87.

<sup>11</sup> See this article in Winer, *R. W.*

<sup>12</sup> The phrase "seven seas" (of Palestine) occurs also in *Gittin*, 57a; *Pirke De R. Eliezer*, ch. xviii.

The same is the case with—

VII. The *lake of Apamea*, although belonging to Syria. The Rabbis, however, have counted parts of Syria in many respects as belonging yet to Palestine.<sup>1</sup>

The lake of Apamea is mentioned also by Abulfeda,<sup>2</sup> and by the Code Augusteus,<sup>3</sup> who counts the lakes of Palestine thus: *Lacus Tiberiaden*, *lacus Banayan*,<sup>4</sup> *lacus Cades seu Emessae*,<sup>5</sup> *lacus Apameae*.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Aruch Compl.* article "Apamea," and *Erech Millin*, of Rapoport, the same article.

<sup>2</sup> *Tabula Syr.* 152, 157.

<sup>3</sup> See *Monatsschrift*, xvii. 376.

<sup>4</sup> *Paneas*, *Gen. R.*, ch. 63.

<sup>5</sup> This lake is mentioned also in *Jer. Talmud*; see *Aruch Completum*, III. 431.